

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00
USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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O 141407Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7239
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST UNN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 5162

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: OPPOSITION VIEWS OF BEGIN AND HIS GOVERNMENT

1. TO ROUND OUT MY IMPRESSIONS OF PROSPECTS FOR THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT ON THE EVE OF HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON, I HAVE MET SEPARATELY IN THE LAST 48 HOURS WITH SHIMON PERES AND ABBA EBAN. THEIR VIEWS ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR. A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FOLLOW.
2. THE LABOR PARTY REMAINS DISSPIRTED AND IN DISARRAY AFTER ITS DEFEAT, WITH CONTINUING LEADERSHIP AMBIGUITIES INVOLVING THE LONG-STANDING RABIN-PERES-ALLON TRIANGLE -- STILL UNRESOLVED. PERES FRANKLY PREDICTS IT WILL TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS TO GET THE PARTY BACK ON TRACK POLITICALLY, ALTHOUGH HE FEELS CONFIDENT HE CAN ACHIEVE THAT BY THE END OF THE YEAR. BECAUSE OF THIS STATE OF
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AFFAIRS AND ALSO A BROADER CONCERN ABOUT NATIONAL AS DISTINCT FROM PARTISAN POLICY INTERESTS, PERES TOLD ME LABOR WOULD GIVE BEGIN TIME TO PURSUE HIS FOREIGN POLICY APPROACH WITH LITTLE OVERT OPPOSITION. HE DOES NOT EXPECT BEGIN TO BE ABLE TO RECONCILE HIS HISTORIC CONVICTIONS WITH THE FACTS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL LIFE TOADY, BUT HE BELIEVES HE SHOULD BE GIVEN THE CHANCE

TO TRY. PERES ALSO PREDICTS THAT SERIOUS STRAINS WILL DEVELOP WITHIN BEGIN'S GOVERNMENT COALITION, BUT THAT THEY WILL TAKE SOME MONTHS TO CRYSTALLIZE. MEANWHILE, NOT ONLY IS LABOR WEAK AND DISSPIRITED, BUT BEGIN AND THE LIKUD WILL HAVE RELATIVELY FEW PROBLEMS WHICH CANNOT BE READILY OVERCOME.

3. PERES STILL SAYS HE HAS HOPES THAT YADIN AND THE DMC WILL REMAIN IN OPPOSITION, BUT I INFER THAT HE IS ABOUT RECONCILED TO THE FACT THAT THIS WILL NOT OCCUR. HE THINKS YADIN WILL HAVE NO SUCCESS IN TRYING TO MODIFY BEGIN'S FOREIGN POLICY VIEWS FROM WITHIN, AND ALSO STRESSES THAT DAYAN'S ADMITTED PRAGMATISM AND CREATIVITY WILL BE EXERCISED EXCLUSIVELY AS BEGIN'S AGENT. DAYAN'S CURRENT POLITICAL POSITION GIVES HIM NO AUTHORITY TO CHALLENGE BEGIN ON FUNDAMENTALS, SHOULD HE WISH TO DO SO.

4. BOTH PERES AND EBAN AGREE THAT BEGIN HAS MOVED WITH CONSIDERABLE ASSURANCE TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION AS NATIONAL LEADER. BUT THEY ALSO AGREE THAT HIS LIFE-LONG COMMITMENT TO THE ISRAELI CLAIM TO THE WEST BANK IS UNSHAKABLE. BOTH SAY THAT THEY THINK THERE IS ONLY A TINY CHANCE THAT EVEN FOR "TOTAL PEACE" BEGIN COULD BRING HIMSELF TO SIGN AWAY THIS HISTORIC TERRITORY. (I HAVE ALSO BEEN GIVEN THIS SAME GLOOMY ESTIMATE DURING CONFIDENTIAL

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THE PAST WEEK BY SOME OF BEGIN'S LONG-TIME INIMATES.)

5. PERES AND EBAN BOTH HOPE AGAINST HOPE THAT BEGIN AND PRESIDENT CARTER WILL FIND ENOUGH PARALLELISM IN THEIR APPROACHES TO BE ABLE TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF A GENEVA NEGOTIATING PROCESS, AND THEY DO NOT DISCOUNT THIS POSSIBILITY. WHAT NEITHER CAN IMAGINE IS BEGIN'S ULTIMATE AGREEMENT WITH EITHER THE US OR THE ARABS ON A FORMULA FOR FINAL RESOLUTION OF THE WEST BANK AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTIONS. LEWIS

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